REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

The rejection of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. §102 as allegedly anticipated by Banwell '313 is respectfully traversed.

As will noted in the following discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's understanding of Banwell and/or applicant's claims is erroneous in many material respects. However, to simply matters and more quickly place this case in condition for allowance, original claims 1-4 have now been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer in favor of new claims 5-16 which are also directed towards delivery of network policy to an edge switch so as to administer the policy locally to a respective user. For example, the new claims are directed to the context of a network with a core and edge switches, the provision of snooping in the edge switches as a preliminary step, the modification of the payload of a reply packet and the provisioning of policy information. Claim 9 adds the feature of a modifier flag which is part of the mechanism by which the switch determines that the reply is unmodified. Claim 13 relates to the extraction of policy information from a payload coming back from the user but omits some of the limitations of other independent claims. In short, the claims of this application have been amended to emphasize fundamental differences between Banwell's topology discovery and the policy administration devised by the applicants.

In particular, the invention is concerned with administering a network policy on a user. To do this it needs to know the particular edge switch to which the user is connected so that the policy information can be down loaded to that edge switch. However, it is not, like Banwell, concerned with discovering the topology of the network or whether the switch is an edge switch.

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If a policy server communicates using network addresses with a user, it is not concerned with the topology of the intervening network; internet (IP) addressing specifies only the source and destination and therefore the policy server, such as the policy server 11 in applicants' Figure 1, does not know that User 1 is connected to, specifically, Unit 1. The point of the present invention is that it does not need the network topology to determine that User 1 is connected to Unit 1 and that Unit 1 will be the local administrator of the network policy to User 1.

Banwell employs a variety of means to communicate with the units progressively across the network to discover all the point to point links. Applicants do not do this.

Applicants provide a preliminary step, particularly the enabling of all the edge switches in the network to perform snooping on control management packets (such as ICMP packets if that is the control protocol in use). Banwell does not disclose such snooping (and has no use for it).

Second, a packet is sent not addressed to the edge switch but to the terminal user. This packet is coded as a request packet that will elicit a reply with the payload unmodified. Banwell clearly does not do this. All his replies contain, and are intended to contain, new payload information such as the network serial number, model number etc.

The edge switch acts, not on the request packet (except to forward it to the end user) but to the reply packet. This is not disclosed by Banwell.

Further, the switch diverts the packet (if it is coded as a reply packet) to the switch management agent and the reply packet then has its payload modified to identify the edge switch.

Further, the network policy is downloaded to the edge switch. This may be done by down loading from the payload in the reply packet or by subsequent communication from the policy server.
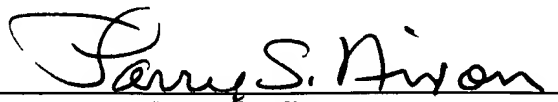
The point of snooping and the diversion of the reply packet to the management agent means that the process does not interfere with the normal network communications to and from the user.

Banwell does not disclose in policy administration, the enabling of snooping on edge switches, the detection at an edge switch of coded replies from a user, the detection of unmodified payloads or in general the downloading of policy information to an edge switch as thus identified. In relation to claim s6, 10 and 13, Banwell does not extract policy information from a reply packet headed for the policy server from the user. In relation to claims 9 and 15, Banwell does not employ any modifier flag that denotes whether the payload is unmodified or changed.

Accordingly, this entire application is now believed to be in condition for allowance and a formal Notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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